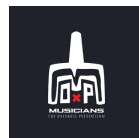
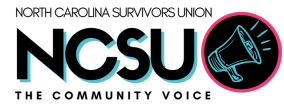




Community Education Group
www.communityeducationgroup.org



North Carolina Council of Churches
Strength in Unity, Peace through Justice



SB458: #ExpandGoodSamNC and Save Lives

North Carolina was one of the first states to enact an overdose Good Samaritan Law, a law designed to encourage people to call 911 in overdose emergencies by providing immunities for certain crimes. Today, Good Samaritan Laws exist in 48 states and the District of Columbia.

But North Carolina's law has not kept up with the times. The drug scene has changed, and our law needs to be updated. As other states have adopted Good Samaritan protections, we've learned best practices that we could also benefit from here in North Carolina.

In 2022, **we lost 4,243 North Carolinians to overdose**--more than 11 people per day, and a 7% increase from the year before. An adequate Good Samaritan Law can be one tool for stemming the tide of deaths. A **study by the Government Accountability Office** affirms that Good Samaritan Laws have the potential to lower overdose death rates.

Some of the key changes we need to make include providing immunity for:

- Everyone at the scene of an overdose -- the person experiencing an overdose, the caller, and others assisting at the scene -- from both arrest and prosecution. Currently, only the person experiencing an overdose and the caller are shielded from prosecution but not arrest, and others at the scene are not protected.
- Possession of fentanyl, given the fact that fentanyl is involved in over two-thirds of all overdose fatalities; methamphetamine also is not covered. The law should provide immunity for drug possession broadly, without confusing carve-outs for certain substances and amounts.
- Death by Distribution charges -- We know the fear of such charges prevents people from calling for help and, in an emergency, saving a life should be the first priority.
- Students calling campus security in a substance-related emergency.

With overdose deaths at an all-time high, people need to feel safe calling 911 so they don't hesitate before seeking help. Join a growing coalition of organizations, faith leaders, and North Carolinians who support expanding North Carolina's Good Samaritan Law so that it serves its intended purpose. Find out more about our efforts at **[ExpandGoodSamNC.com](https://www.expandgoodsamnc.com)**.

Randy Abbott, Parent

"On January 31st of 2015, while attending a small party, our daughter Vanessa suffered an accidental fatal overdose. Because they were afraid of being arrested, the group she was with panicked, they took the time to be sure all drugs and paraphernalia were removed from the residence and that others had the chance to leave before calling 911. Had they called immediately, based on the actual response time, Vanessa may have survived. A strong, well-publicized Good Samaritan Law is urgently needed in NC to save lives."

Jim Albright, Director, Guilford County Emergency Services

"Opioid overdoses have the potential to be immediately dangerous to life and health and have a very effective antagonist, naloxone, if used appropriately and in a timely manner. The Good Samaritan law should fully protect those that are attempting to help others from this emergency, whether summoning help or providing lifesaving interventions."

Abby Coulter, North Carolina Survivors Union

"People who use drugs tell us that they don't feel comfortable calling 911 in an overdose emergency – there are too many exceptions to the protections in our law. We distribute naloxone, but people don't always have it when they need it; in an overdose minutes matter, and we know that these expanded protections would mean real lives saved."

Karen Howard, Chair, Chatham County Board of Commissioners

"The intention of the Good Samaritan law is to save lives and if we can shorten the timeline and increase the chances of getting life-saving support to a victim of overdose in a timely manner by reducing this critical barrier, then we are supporting the impact of that law, we are saving lives and we are giving families another chance to get a loved one the care and attention addiction deserves."

Lisa Ball-McIsaac, CADC, ICADC, Operations Director, Insight Recovery Center, Asheville

"I've heard countless horror stories of people not wanting to alert the authorities of an overdose because they don't want to get implicated. Our communities have such great resources—opioid response teams, the 988 crisis line, and others—and if we can update the Good Samaritan law to include comprehensive protections, we can keep people alive so that they can access the care they need."

Sherri Murrell, District Court Judge, Judicial District 15B

"Deaths resulting from drug overdoses have sharply increased since 2019. The Good Samaritan 911 Law provides a critical tool in the fight to stop this trend and save lives. Removing barriers, such as fear of being arrested and criminally charged, that keep people from seeking medical attention for themselves or other people will result in fewer deaths and more opportunities for people with substance use disorders to get the help they need."

Reverend Eric Reece, MDiv, Robbinsville United Methodist Church

"When I hear of someone dying of an overdose, I wonder if they died alone. Was someone there who if they knew about the Good Samaritan Law could have called 911 without fear of arrest and saved a precious life? When others passed by, the Good Samaritan stopped to help. It took courage. He could have been blamed but he stopped to help and saved a life and gave us an example of helping those, even strangers, in need. An updated Good Samaritan Law in NC will save many lives, save family and friends from grief and help people live and have a chance to recover."